

Message Text

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PAGE 01 BEIRUT 00885 292305Z

64

ACTION SS-25

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R 281416Z JAN 76 CORRECTED COPY FOR MCN)

FM AMEMBASSY BEIRUT

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 8364

INFO AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS

C O N F I D E N T I A L BEIRUT 0885

EXDIS

E.O. 11652: XGDS-2

TAGS: PFOR, PDIP, LE, LY

SUBJECT: POSSIBLE EXCHANGE OF DIPLOMATIC MISSIONS BETWEEN LEBANON
AND SYRIA

REF: BEIRUT 772; DAMASCUS 428

1. I AGREE WITH AMBASSADOR MURPHY THAT IDEA OF ESTABLISHMENT SYRIAN
LEBANESE DIPLOMATIC RELATIONS TO HELP REASSURE LEBANESE
CHRISTIANS WOULD NOT BENEFIT FROM IDENTIFICATION WITH U.S.
AS SPONSOR AND REGRET THAT BEIRUT REFTEL MAY HAVE GIVEN
IMPRESSION WE WERE RECOMMENDING DIRECT RATHER THAN INDIRECT
FEEDING OF THIS IDEA TO THE SYRIANS.

2. WHILE I ALSO AGREE THAT IDEA HAS ASPECTS OF A GIMMICK, IT IS
A FACT THAT LEBANESE, LIKE MANY OTHERS, SEEM FOND OF GIMMICKS AND
ARE EVEN PREPARED TO KILL AND BE KILLED OVER THEM. ENTIRE
CURRENT ARGUMENT OVER CHANGING 6/5 RATIO IN PARLIAMENT TO 5/5
IS AFTER ALL SOMETHING OF A GIMMICK. IT MAKES LITTLE DIFFERENCE IN
SUBSTANCE AND LEBANESE LEADERS KNOW THIS. ITS IMPORTANCE IS SYMBOLIC
MUCH AS WOULD BE THE ESTABLISHMENT OF DIPLOMATIC RELATIONS
(AND THEREFORE THE SYMBOLIC LOOSENING OF SPECIAL INTIMACY)
BETWEEN LEBANON AND SYRIA.

3. IT SEEMS LOGICAL TO US THAT SYRIAN GOVERNMENT MAY NOT
WISH TO MAKE SUCH A CHANGE AT PRESENT. SINCE WE SENT IN THE
ORIGINAL IDEA, HOWEVER, A KARAME INTIMATE AND SHIA LAWYER,
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MOHSEN SLIM MENTIONED IT ON HIS OWN INITIATIVE TO EMBOFF.
IDEA ALSO AROSE IN CONVERSATION ANOTHER EMBOFF HAD WITH
LOCAL JOURNALIST. IF IDEA IS AS GOOD AS WE THINK IT IS, THEREFORE,
I HAVE LITTLE DOUBT THAT IT WILL EVENTUALLY OCCUR TO HIGHER LEVEL
LEBANESE WITHOUT OURPROMPTING. GESTURE WOULD OF COURSE HAVE
MORE VALUE IF SYRIANS OFFERED IT THAN IF LEBANESE REQUESTED IT.
LAMBRAKIS

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*** Current Handling Restrictions *** EXDIS

*** Current Classification *** CONFIDENTIAL

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